



Children in Wales Plant yng Nghymru

Parents' Week Conference 2014

The *Children In Wales* conference this year was around the theme of strengthening the contribution of parenting support services to early intervention family support. Participants considered key messages from speakers about early intervention research, including the main principles and ingredients of successful parenting programmes.

Feedback from participants indicated that the conference helped them to keep abreast of current thinking and developments nationally and across localities. Almost all respondents indicated that, as a result of attending the conference, they will develop new ideas and services, disseminate knowledge to their teams and partners and undertake more reflective practice.

Gail Bennett of Flintshire County Council and Chair of the National Parenting Coordinators' Network, welcomed everyone to the conference and then introduced the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty, Vaughan Gething AM. The Deputy Minister stated that

“Parents should expect parenting support to be of high quality and delivered by well-trained, informed and competent staff. In these challenging times we also need to be sure that we are committing our stretched resources to parenting support programmes where there is evidence they will work and represent value for money.”

Upon formally launching the “Parenting in Wales: Guidance on engagement and support”, the Deputy minister indicated that he wants this guidance to be a practical resource for those involved in this challenging but crucial area of work.

“I hope that practitioners, local authorities, the Third Sector, and the Welsh Government can all work together within a common framework to support parents. We all have a responsibility to place the rights of children and improving outcomes for families at the centre of what we do.”

Kirsten Asmussen, Evidence Analyst at the Early Intervention Foundation, spoke about what we know from research about what makes an effective parenting intervention. She gave examples of the best evidence based programmes and considered what factors ensured they were successful. She noted that monitoring systems are important to know if a programme is being run with fidelity and suggested that with normal everyday

concerns of parents we can be experimental but that we must monitor to assess effectiveness. Kirsten finished her talk with a list of Do's and Don'ts, notably the need to have systems for assessing parents' needs and to carefully specify the target population because one size does not fit all.

Kirsten's presentation is available here: [Parenting Programmes: What Works?](#)

She welcomed the publication of the new Welsh Government guidance on parenting and suggested that the challenges ahead relate to prioritising what really needs to be achieved while taking into consideration policy, guidance, capacity and budgets. She urged conference delegates to contact their local Network representative in order to 'catch the wave' of renewed interest across agencies resulting from the new guidance and to get involved in the local implementation of good practice in parenting support.

Gail's presentation is available here: [Key messages from the National Parenting Co-ordinators' Network](#)

Shelley Davies, Senior Partnership Manager, Powys County Council and Dr. Sue Evans, Powys Teaching Health Board spoke about the early intervention strategy developed by Powys Children and Young People's partnership. This approach involves strategic coordination and delivery of complementary programmes for parents, children, schools and early years' settings. They outlined the outcomes achieved and considered future opportunities and challenges. They shared their top ten tips for achieving a strategic approach including the importance of getting your commissioning manager onto parenting training in order to secure support when the going gets tough. Sue stressed that fidelity is vital within the context of bottom up development.

Shelley and Sue's presentation is available here [Opportunities & challenges for planning and delivery](#)

Dr John Coleman, Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University, praised the approach to parenting support being taken in Wales and the work of *Children In Wales* and the National Parenting Coordinators' Network. John described the new STAGE framework that he developed in response to what parents bring to him. The framework draws on current research and on Dr. Coleman's experience in running workshops for parents of teenagers. John suggested that having this framework will be helpful to restoring parental self-confidence. He stressed that it is hugely important for parents to learn that they are important and that parents matter to teenagers just as much as before but in a different way. He suggested that we need more thinking and discussion about parenting for adolescents, better linkage between research and practice and that we need to identify, and share, the principles of effective parenting.

John's presentation is available here [STAGE: a new framework for working with parents of teenagers](#)

Angela Davies, Director of Creative Parent Engagement UK gave a talk on ways that schools can better support parents during transition to secondary school.

She described the potential and challenges of adopting an early intervention based approach to supporting parents through this process. Looking first at the research base and rationale behind this area of work Angela then gave examples of projects she is currently involved in. She referred to the emerging workforce of teachers with responsibility for engaging parents and who are working in a cluster-wide multi-agency approach. She noted that this is proving effective, particularly in sharing information and in providing parents with skills and support in order to help them be effective and equal support partners in the process.

Angela's presentation is available here [Parenting Support & Transition process in School](#)

Workshops as follows were facilitated:

'How to Develop and Evaluate a Parenting Intervention: Ten steps for success'. - Kirsten's workshop addressed how to develop and evaluate parenting interventions. She looked at steps to setting up a randomised control style, with discussion on piloting and evaluating outcomes before taking interventions to scale. Kirsten talked about the importance of links with local universities and the value of statistical analysis in considering outcomes. The workshop was both informative and thought provoking.

'Supporting Parents via the Pupil Deprivation Grant' - overview of the deprivation support grant and expectations of how it should be used as well as sharing of ideas about how to support parents in partnership with other services.

'Unpacking Parenting in Wales: Guidance on engagement and support'

The guidance lands on our in-box/desk what do we do with it? Do we still need local strategies or local planning tools to get the job done? What do we do locally? Who needs to be involved?

'Wales Neglect Project' - working together to help neglected children as early as possible. The Welsh Neglect Project aims to improve multi-agency responses and services to address child neglect. Participants were invited to discuss what they think the most important features of effective multi-agency working are to reach neglected children as early as possible.

Future Events

Participants were asked to suggest topics which they wished Children In Wales and the Parenting Coordinators' Network to address. The following topics were suggested and these will be addressed in the coming year. Discussions are already taking place about taking forward work on embedding support for parents of adolescents into parenting programmes.

Topics suggested by participants:

1. Focus on teenagers and parenting / parenting programmes for teenagers / Inter-generational issues in discussion on adolescents
2. Working with parents regarding sexuality and sexual health
3. Parental conflict
4. Working with the impact of mental ill health on families
5. I would like to learn more about evidence based interventions that schools use effectively with parents/families / Community focused schools
6. Further evaluation of programmes; other approaches; i.e. why is neuroscience evidence in terms of parenting not incorporated/discussed. Additionally neuroscience key theme
7. Specific father engagement/work
8. Further information regarding parenting specifically for single parents and those with children who have learning difficulties
9. Family learning
10. 'BME' families, children and families accessing services
11. More detail on the voice of participants of parenting courses and impact over 2 years would be good
12. A conference specifically aimed at practitioners about the strategic roles – I will send proposal next parenting network meeting
13. How to roll out a wide range of parent support across a big authority without enough staff where there is high complex need